DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 122 195 CG 010 526

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TITLE The Role and Function of the Vocational Principal in Curriculum Planning.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 16p.; Not available in hard copy due to marginal reproducibility of original document

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Coordination; *Curriculum Planning; *Leadership Responsibility; *Organizational Climate; Performance Based Education; Secondary Education; State of the Art Reviews; *Vocational Directors; *Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

The importance of curriculum development must be emphasized and integrated at all educational levels. The vocational principal, as the educational leader of his building, is in a prime position to influence meaningful curriculum development and to actively participate in its formulation. It should be delegated as a duty of the role of the vocational principal to lead the faculty in the development of relevant curriculum instruction and to research current and innovative methods of delivering such services. Without the leadership and participation of the vocational principal, curriculum foundations and renovations will developmentally be more difficult and time consuming. If a vocational principal has as his main objective the deliverance of functional, up-to-date material for his students, he must concentrate on the area of curriculum development and revision to meet these objectives. (Author)

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ED122195

THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE VOCATIONAL PRINCIPAL IN CURRICULUM PLANNING

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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The chief administrator in any vocational/technical institution will invariably become the key to success or failure of the programs established therein. The duties assigned to the individual in this capacity will vary from place to place depending on the educational philosophy of the institution and the environmental components which affect the decision-making.

It is the objective of this article to identify and elaborate upon the competencies necessary for successful and functional participation of the vocational principal in the realm of curriculum development. Attention will be directed toward the importance of curriculum development, revision and updating in response to the demand for accountability and relevancy in our professional instruction.

Due to the fact that vocational education has as its basic core the goal of providing salable skills to the youth and adults in the nation, the vocational principal, as the educational leader, must see that the curriculum is developed with certain considerations in mind. Among these are the recommendations that research activities concerning performance objectives in vocational education curriculum be orientated to individual student needs within the varied groups preparing for different levels of employment. Research which will formulate performance objectives that permit maximum flexibility in meeting geographic occupational needs

and technological variations throughout the area must be incorporated. The development of a format for evaluation results that provides both verbal and statistical information and which invokes confidence in the results must also be considered.

It is not an easy task to define the objectives of curriculum planning within the framework of our educational institutions. Accepting the tenet that curriculum is multi-dimensional creates further complications. Theoretically effective curriculum should result in advancing an individual in the areas of self-realization, critical thinking, citizenship and vocation. Ultimately curriculum preparation must cover the scope of experiences leading to the acquisition or expansion of adept skills in social and cultural diversity, human development and maturity and the nature of knowledge and learning concepts.

One of the recognized priority roles of the vocational principal is that of an educational leader who must be a well-versed contributor to learning styles of curriculum. As the "Report of the Citizens Commission on Basic Education" stated: Any attempt to get good schools without focusing directly and continuously upon the curriculum and instructional practices is surely doomed to failure.

This is especially relevant to principals of vocational institutions, as schools are finally beginning to emphasize individual approaches which tend to personalize education for learners. Moreover, curriculum modifications are making it

easier for learners to recognize relationships and relevance. Operational examples of this are found within the framework of vocational education in that students are learning meaningful skills which they will carry out into the world with them.

Basically speaking, broad general goals are needed in preparing curricular program objectives for the rapidly changing technology existing today. These objectives, once defined and operating, can then be utilized to define the needs of the students in light of courses, activities and experiences. Performance goals may also be integrated into the instructional objectives in order to foster competencies which focus on the development of the knowledge, experiences and skills an individual must possess to succeed in his environment.

The vocational principal should concentrate his participation in curricular efforts toward the development of worth and dignity of the students as well as the acknowledgement of the inherent potential in each person. In this manner these individuals will freely examine themselves and their relationship with the existing curriculum and will respond according to their needs with contributions which will affect relevant and ongoing curriculum revision.

Albert J. Pautler, in Teaching Shop and Laboratory Subjects, has summarized the main role of the vocational principal as requiring an adequate knowledge of students and the surrounding community in order to formulate meaningful educational objectives from which realistic curriculum experiences and valid evaluation methods can be based.

The vocational principal must be aware of all areas of curricular development in order to aid in the devising of steps of action for the improvement of the educational system and the coordination of its elements.

Many changes are taking place in our vocational schools today. The principal must be aware of all the current developments within the area of curriculum. A study conducted by Phi Delta Kappa revealed that among nine major educational issues confronting educators at all levels across the country the area of curriculum content and how it should be organized ranked third. This information is pertinent when combined with the current emphasis upon the decentralization of the administrative authority-structure in awarding more decision-making power to building principals who should be most aware of educational needs.

A duty awarded the vocational principal is to provide a significant influence in the development of a meaningful curricular experience for the students. This encompasses the tasks of becoming a leader in the development of instructional practices and methods as well as ensuring that learning and teaching receive the top priorities in the school.

An alarming number of educators, building principals among them, continue to define curriculum in terms of the state guides and what is taught rather than expanding their curricular plans to incorporate the quality of experiences necessary to meet the basic goals of vocational education. The instigation of new curricular experiences should be considered,

implemented and evaluated.

Ralph Tyler expounded upon the problems of planning an instructional program relating to students needs. In his book, Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction, he points out that the educational philosophy of a particular institution will affect the organization of the curriculum. In this respect, faculty participation in the development of objectives relevant to student needs is mandatory. Formulation, discussion and an understanding of a statement of philosophy and a statement of psychology of learning must be facilitated by all individuals who will eventually formulate objectives, experiences and activities. Coordination will be an important factor in this effort. This coordination of efforts is a duty of the vocational principal.

Individuals in educational authority positions are finding it more difficult to define their roles and, in some cases, to defend their existence. The various segments of the school community - the school board, the superintendent, the teachers, the non-professional staff, the parents and the people who live within the school community - see the duties of the principal from diversified views.

Furthermore, considering the differences that sometimes arise between teachers and administrators in revising and implementing the curriculum, some educational and personal relationships must be established in order to promote a more effective instructional program for students. Many teachers tend to view the principal not as the head educator or

coordinator of activities, as traditionally expected, but as the central office executive. This disparity can only divide the philosophy and objectives of the program.

As the facility leader the vocational principal should assume the responsibilities, with his staff, for developing and revising curriculum. He should follow the participatory-management route. This method of leadership is characterized by involvement of the staff and requires an understanding of the balances of the social, political and educational forces prevalent in the school.

Theoretically, power should flow from the principal, but it should be channeled into a cooperative venture with the staff. The effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum will consequently be a reflection of the involvement and effectiveness of everyone concerned. In this manner the principal leads the staff by his organizational experiences and also serves as a resource person.

The vocational principal must accept the fact that certain competency expectations will be delegated to him. Primary in the creation of a functional learning environment for students is the development of an humanistic atmosphere in the school derived from the active contributions of ideas, perceptions, needs, problems and expertise of students, parents, and staff. This effort must be organized and coordinated by the principal.

Once this humanistic atmosphere has been developed as a total learning environment the principal may wish to solicit interactions from these sources to analyze individualized

assessments of current curricular components. The student must be the focal point in curriculum development. This approach will result in items which should be incorporated into the existing curriculum.

Optimum learning conditions for curriculum development warrant interpersonal relations with the school and industrial community. Identification and analysis of community characteristics including social classes, cultural values, interest groups, pressure groups and community power structures will be beneficial to ongoing curriculum planning.

In incorporating characteristics of the target population into curriculum planning Mager and Beach have established several categories. These areas, outlined in Developing Vocational Instruction, include the physical nature of the population, the educational background of the students, the motivational level of the students, the interests, special skills and aptitudes of the students and the attitudes, biases and prejudices of the general population.

The belief that societal needs should determine a viable vocational curriculum is espoused by Robert Poland in the article "Manpower Planning and Curriculum Construction" (American Vocational Association Journal, October, 1975). Mr. Poland notes that those responsible for curriculum development be aware of present and future job trends, current methods and modes of curriculum construction and available public resources. He feels that manpower planning is an extremely important factor in curriculum development.

In considering these factors certain steps must be used to determine the potential of the proposed curriculum while it is in the planning stages. The vocational principal, as the institutional leader, should oversee these steps in order to systematize the questions and decisions which require answers as curriculum is being formulated. These steps would include: (a) assessment of student and program needs as a basis for developing objectives, including documentation and priority-ranking of these needs and interests, (b) translation of the progr[illegible] and student needs into objectives while identifying alternative decisions and their possible consequences, (c) identification of data on parent and community preferences, (d) identification of the needs of employers, (e) assessment of manpower opportunities, (f) surveying of employer and job requirements and (g) soliciting of data regarding characteristics of the community population.

These steps are suggested in an attempt to provide a continuous process for updating and revising the curriculum to assure that program offerings fit student needs and interests as well as employment requirements.

The vocational principal has the responsibility of keeping informed regarding developments in curriculum planning outside his jurisdiction. By instituting and analyzing investigations into the range of alternative program areas, manpower needs and program offerings at other institutions he will be insuring himself against making decisions which will be quickly outmoded.

The vocational principal may have the opportunity at some point to initiate or participate in a direct, district-wide cross-sharing experience in educational leadership where the staffs and administrators of other area schools would propose, recommend and review suggested changes in the area of curriculum. This approach represents a concentrated effort to enable all members of an educational team to become involved in curriculum development. Results of such interactions could be prepared in a formal report and submitted to the board(s) of education for consideration.

In order to reduce discrepancies between job requirements and curriculum-produced skills the educational leader must make sure that certain specified steps are taken before the vocational curriculum is finally in operation. These considerations include decisions on the method of curriculum organization and selection of program offerings, assessment of task analysis derived from area employers, definition of objectives of the program, decision regarding the measures of success in meeting these objectives and assessment of the characteristics and capabilities of the students.

In coordinating curriculum efforts and activities the principal must urge that all faculty members have an active, participating role. In addition, job requirements for the various occupations relating to the vocational curriculum must be surveyed and analyzed. In completing this phase the best method to utilize is the establishment of advisory or craft committees derived from members of the community. Surveys can

also be used in order to ascertain a breakdown of detailed task steps and units to integrate into the curriculum.

In Leadership in Administration of Vocational and Technical Education, Wenrich and Wenrich cite the advantages of utilizing lay citizens in curriculum development. They propose that committees representing "industry, labor, local government, public service agencies, and education consumers" provide factual information regarding evolving occupational needs, data pertinent to local industry and manpower studies, insight into the institutional philosophy, perspective on the political viability of curriculum projections and advice on economic benefits of proposed programs. With respect to detailed task analyses, advisory committee contributions include job identification facts, skill requirements, job responsibilities, working conditions and physical demands of the job.

As the institutional administrator the vocational principal must be aware of articulation efforts which would affect planning on all levels of vocational education training.

According to Merle E. Strong in The Philosophy for Quality Vocational Educational Programs, a vocational program "must be broad in terms of having curricula that respond to the needs of the wide range of abilities and interests, and at the same time respond to contemporary requirements of the work force" in planning to meet the vocational and technical needs of a geographical area. This calls for definite articulation planning between the levels of institutions in planning.

In considering the importance of articulation patterns on

curriculum planning the vocational principal should consider the effect of the state-mandated priorities to be incorporated into the program planning as well as local, state and national manpower projections. As an end-product of the amalgamation of articulation patterns and curriculum planning periodic review and analysis of programs should be effected both on a local and state level. The vocational principal must be aware of the weight of these factors on curriculum evaluation.

In evaluating curriculum the vocational principal must take into consideration the state of the economy, appropriation changes, the operating budget level of his school and political budget limitations. This review should be made in conjunction with the actual curriculum planning. Some budgetary controls may have an effect on proposed curriculum.

Competencies expected of the vocational principal are, because of the aforementioned considerations, diverse. He must direct the development of the building philosophy of education and apply it to the curriculum development program. He must see that provisions are made for articulation between the grades and between school units. He may be expected to chair a curriculum council for the building or the district.

The vocational principal must also assume responsibility for securing lay participation. A program of intervisitation of instructors may be needed. Arrangements for the utilization of test data in curriculum development and revision is mandatory.

The institutional leader must also conduct research

locally for curriculum revision and the improvement of instruction. He may be required to write professional articles for publication regarding curriculum innovations. Job skill requirements suggested by established local advisory committees must be analyzed. Local manpower analyses must be conducted.

Furthermore, student preferences and interests must be determined and coordinated by the vocational principal. Parents must be screened to determine preferences. Community surveys must be developed to assess area concerns. Current local, state or federal actions which could affect successful curriculum development as to emphasis or direction must be determined. Curricular offerings in operation at other institutions must be reviewed.

Finally, the vocational principal must evaluate the effectiveness of the current curriculum program. He must formulate new curriculum proposals and recommend revised programs to the Board of Education for approval.

The role of the vocational principal indeed provides a challenge. It is through the placement of effective and competent individuals in this role that we will affect the future quality of our vocational curriculum programs.

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